

1993

IBS NATIONAL CONVENTION
FRIDAY-SATURDAY-SUNDAY • MARCH 12 - 14, 1993
NEW YORK RAMADA HOTEL - MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
NEW YORK CITY

It once appeared the 1993 IBS National Convention was doomed from the start. And for the first time in over 50 years, the possibility existed that the IBS National Convention would not be held.

While IBS has had to contend with gas shortages, program printing delays, a war in the Persian Gulf and other minor catastrophes over the years, never had they been hit with so many difficulties at the same time.

In the summer of 1992, it appeared the convention for 1993 would be much better than other New York Conventions in the past. The staff had found a better, newer hotel located away from the congestion, noise and confusion of midtown Manhattan. The Vista hotel at the World Trade Center offered all the meeting and breakout rooms required for an IBS convention, in a much newer facility. There was excitement, energy and enthusiasm over the selection.

However, by the fall, IBS was hit with their first blow.

IBS President Jeff Tellis, the main force behind IBS, fell ill. By the winter, his doctors determined he required heart bypass surgery, which was performed on February 2nd. For the month preceeding the surgery, Jeff was unable to do the work required to put the Convention together.

Fortunately, IBS had a Board member who was both able and willing to take over the responsibility of planning the 1993 convention. Diana Ades is not only a Certified Meeting Professional experienced in all kinds of conference and meeting planning, she has been an active staff and Board member at IBS for the past several years. With her skills, experience and energy, the prospects for a successful convention were getting better, despite the fact that the actual planning had not begun until the beginning of February.

Mailings went out to stations across the country, and responses began coming in. Diana enlisted the aid of another IBS convention staff member, Jay Rosen, to stuff envelopes, lick stamps and make phone calls. Other board and staff members helped when they could. Speakers and exhibitors were lined up, many for the first time.

The second crisis was the bomb explosion at the World Trade Center on February 26th, a Friday afternoon, at 12:15. Had IBS held to normal form, the convention would have been in the middle of registration and check-in at the moment of the blast. However, the date for the convention was pushed back two weeks to reduce the chances that inclement weather would have any impact on attendance. This scheduling change certainly prevented injuries and possibly deaths among IBS members and friends.

Now however, the Board needed to decide whether or not to postpone, cancel or relocate the Convention. Within a few days, an alternative hotel was located. The Ramada Pennsylvania Hotel was available on short notice, and had enough meeting rooms available to handle IBS.

Because the Convention had been held there for the past several years, the IBS staff was familiar with the facility, and many of the hotel staff were familiar with IBS. There was one slight catch - the Big East basketball tournament was scheduled for the same weekend, and fans from Georgetown, Syracuse, and Pittsburgh would be filling the hotel and some of the larger meeting rooms throughout the weekend.

A phone campaign began to let member and non-member stations know that the convention was indeed on, and that it had merely been relocated. Additional mailings were sent out, and pre-registrations began to trickle in.

Despite all the difficulties thrown in front of the convention planners, the IBS National Convention for 1993 was going to happen - and the convention staff was determined to make it a success. Spirits were high on the Wednesday evening prior to the convention. The packets were ready for assembly, the programs were printed and collated, and live musical entertainment was scheduled for both Friday and Saturday evenings.

However, as the weekend approached, a third sign from above loomed over the Ramada. A major winter storm was approaching from the South, with hurricane force winds, and massive accumulations of snow predicted.

In normal adults with above average intelligence and advanced education, this might have been seen as an indication that perhaps going on with the convention might not be a good idea. However, IBS remained unbowed and undaunted. Registration went on as scheduled on Friday, despite a bomb scare at Madison Square Garden across the street (at 12:15 in the afternoon). The fans from the Big East tournament added color, energy and traffic, not to mention a considerable amount of congestion in the hotel lobby for room check-in.

As is usually the case with IBS conventions, the energy level and spirits of the delegates, speakers and exhibitors were high, despite all the major and minor disasters before and during the weekend. It wasn't easy, but it looked like IBS had pulled it off...Or so we thought.

On Thursday, forecasters began predicting one of the biggest winter storms in the century would hit New York late Friday night and dump about a foot of snow on the city on Saturday. On Friday, speakers began calling in with regrets that they would not be able to get into the city for their sessions. Stations called to cancel their reservations. The Ramada was sold out for the weekend. Stores were emptied of bread, milk, beer and other necessities of life throughout the metropolitan area. There was panic in the streets of New York.

A number of exhibitors decided not to risk being stranded in the snow, and left early. Before noon on Saturday, the exhibit area was almost empty except for two exhibitors. Several sessions had been cancelled because speakers had not arrived, or had left early in an attempt to escape the "storm of the century." Outside, snow was falling at the rate of about two inches or more per hour. Inside, the sessions which were held had good attendance.

Despite everything, the convention was a success for those who were able to make it. After all that happened to make the prospects for IBS dim indeed, the convention went on, although not exactly as planned. Plans for IBS 1994 are already being formulated, with the possibility of a commemorative T-shirt or sweatshirt for the survivors of 1993.

All of us at IBS want to say Thanks...thanks for being at the 1993 Convention to share with us this once in a lifetime (hopefully) occasion. We look forward to 1994 with much less stress.